

SECRET**Strategic Warning Staff**
Washington, D.C. 20301

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MEMORANDUM FOR: A/NIO/W

FROM : Strategic Warning Staff

SUBJECT : Subversion in Red Sea Region

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1. The odds of stepped-up Soviet-backed aggressive moves in the Red Sea region have gone up. The signing on December 2 of the Treaty of Friendship and Cooperation between Ethiopia and South Yemen, coupled with the deteriorating situation in Eritrea and the build-up of South Yemeni military capability by the Soviet Union could presage their more concerted support for subversive forces against moderate neighboring regimes in Djibouti, Oman and Sudan.
2. Their Treaty is similar to the two countries' previous treaties with the USSR. In the past, USSR's Friendship Treaties with its Third World clients have in part served those client regimes as a green light reassurance for military actions against their neighbors. Following Mengitsu's visit to South Yemen, the two leaders issued a joint communique strongly critical of the West and the pro-Western governments in the area and expressed support for the "genuine liberation movements" in the region, including the Omani insurgents. [redacted] the USSR and Ethiopia collaborated in early December in forming a new Afar insurgency group, the Progressive People's Organization. The PPO is expected to conduct military operations against Gouled's government inside Djibouti and is to coordinate its activities with the Addis Ababa-based Democratic Front for the Liberation of Djibouti, the principal political organization of Afar dissidents in exile. In recent months, the Soviets have also been hinting of a revived insurgency by the Popular Front for the Liberation of Oman.
3. Soviet-Ethiopian-South Yemeni interests in Djibouti, Oman and Sudan coincide. Because the three governments are close to the West, Cairo and Riyadh and because Numayri supports the Eritrean insurgents, Moscow, Addis Ababa and Aden have favored their overthrow.
4. In the past, Ethiopia and South Yemen have provided arms and training to the Omani, Djiboutian and Sudanese dissidents. The Soviets have also supplied arms to these groups through third parties and in late 1976 may have been directly involved in transporting arms from Libya to Ethiopia for the Ansars, the Sudanese Moslem insurgents. Up to now, however, because of the active challenge to Mengitsu's regime in the Ogaden region, both Moscow and Addis Ababa have been somewhat restrained in their backing of Djiboutian and Sudanese dissidents in order to avoid the developments of additional fronts.

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5. Relative stabilization in Ogaden and escalation of fighting in Eritrea, growing importance of Djibouti for augmentation of Western naval presence in the region, and South Yemen's strengthened military capability combine to make subversive forces in the region a more attractive recipients of Soviet, Ethiopian and South Yemeni assistance. Even if Moscow's clients ability to undermine Gouled, Qabus and Numayri's regimes through subversion is probably limited, it could force them to seek an accommodation with the USSR and their radical neighbors.

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